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Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-13 SS-15 SP-02 INR-07 PRS-01 H-01
DHA-02 /051 W
----------050246Z 035156 /61
R 050035Z MAR 77
FM USMISSION USUN NY
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2639
INFO AMEMBASSY SUVA

C O N F I D E N T I A L USUN 0636

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, FJ, US
SUBJ: FIJIAN REACTION TO MOYNIHAN ARTICLE

1. THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE OVERT REACTION IN UN CIRCLES TO THE FREE-SWINGING INTERVIEW OF SENATOR MOYNIHAN, FORMER US REPRESENTATIVE TO THE UNITED NATIONS, IN MARCH EDITION OF PLAYBOY MAGAZINE. HOWEVER, DURING LUNCH CONVERSATION WITH AMB BENNETT MARCH 3, FIJIAN PERM REP VUNIBOBO TOOK VIGOROUS EXCEPTION TO REMARKS IN MOYNIHAN ARTICLE. REFERENCE IS FOUND ON PAGE 79 OF MARCH PLAYBOY, IN WHICH MOYNIHAN WAS DISCUSSING THE SMALL NUMBER OF DEMOCRACIES LEFT IN TODAY'S WORLD, AND ASSERTING THAT OF 78 NEW NATIONS FORMED FROM FORMER COLONIAL POSSESSIONS ONLY 11 REMAIN AS CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACIES. MOYNIHAN WENT ON TO SAY, "AND OF THOSE 11, SEVEN ARE SMALL ISLANDS: GRANADA, THE BAHAMAS, BARBADOS, MAURITUS, FIJI. I MEAN, I'M GLAD THERE'RE DEMOCRACIES, BUT IT WON'T MAKE MUCH DIFFERENCE IF FIJI SHOULD BECOME A SMALL DESPOTISM. THE LAND MASSES OF ASIA WON'T SHAKE*"

2. VUNIBOBO EXPRESSED FUMING INDIGNATION OVER THIS REFERENCE TO FIJI, ASSERTING THAT THIS IS THE
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KIND OF ARROGANCE IN AMERICAN POLITICAL EXPRESSION THAT TURNS THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES OFF AND ALIENATES THEM FROM US. HE SAID HE ACCEPTS FACT THAT FIJI IS A SMALL NATION BUT NEVERTHELESS IT IS A COUNTRY PROUD OF ITS DEMOCRATIC TRADITION AND ONE WHICH SHARES COMMITMENT TO FREE SOCIETY ALONG WITH US, UK AND OTHERS.
DURING CONVERSATION PRECEDING ABOVE REMARKS, VUNIBOBO

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HAD BEEN EXPRESSING PRIDE AND SATISFACTION OVER STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN FIJI AND COMMENTING THAT THERE, AS IN THE US, CITIZENS CAN EXPRESS OPPOSITION TO THEIR GOVERNMENT, "WITHOUT FEARING A KNOCK ON THE DOOR AT MIDNIGHT". VUNIBOBO WARMED TO HIS SUBJECT AS HE TALKED AND ARGUED THAT REMARKS SUCH AS THOSE BY MOYNIHAN REALLY HURT US IMAGE WITH SMALL FREE COUNTRIES SUCH AS HIS.

3. COMMENT: WHILE FIJI CAN HARDLY CLAIM TO BE GREAT WEIGHT ON INTERNATIONAL SCALE, IT IS A PRACTICING DEMOCRACY AND HAS FOLLOWED MODERATE COURSE AT UN. FIJIAN REPS IN GENERAL HAVE BEEN SUPPORTIVE OF AMERICAN POSITIONS, AND FIJI PLAYS INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT ROLE IN COMMITTEE OF 24 DELIBERATIONS. DEPARTMENT WILL RECALL EARLIER SENSITIVITY BY FIJIAN REPS, AND VUNIBOBO'S REACTION TO MOYNIHAN'S ARTICLE ARGUES FOR CONTINUED CONSIDERATION OF THEIR VIEWS. FIJI IS SMALL IN AREA, BUT ITS PEOPLE ARE LARGE IN SPIRIT.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: HUMAN RIGHTS, MEETING REPORTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 05-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977USUNN00636
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770076-0071
Format: TEL
From: USUN NEW YORK
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770388/aaaaczsj.tel
Line Count: 83
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 56b012bd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: STADIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 22-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3193233
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FIJIAN REACTION TO MOYNIHAN ARTICLE
TAGS: PFOR, FJ, US, CI, OAS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/56b012bd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
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Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009